

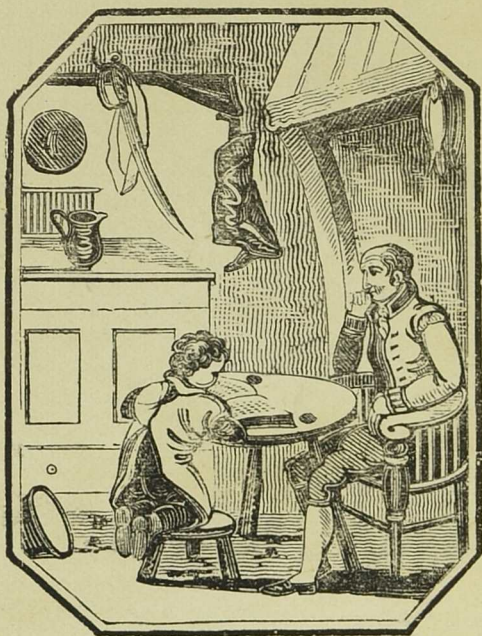


THE
HIDDEN TREASURE

BY MRS. SHERWOOD

LONDON
HOULSTON AND WRIGHT
65, PATERNOSTER ROW.

PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE
HIDDEN TREASURE

BY MRS. SHERWOOD

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BEARER,"
ETC. ETC.

NEW EDITION

LONDON
HOULSTON AND SONS
PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

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THE
HIDDEN TREASURE.

NEARLY thirty years ago, a certain poor invalid soldier, who had belonged to an artillery corps in the East Indies, being permitted to retire from active service, was allowed a pension and a small habitation under the walls of a fort, where he had no other companions than some invalids like himself, poor, dark, and often vicious old men, and one little child, the orphan son of

his only daughter, who had married a European, and had died together with her husband.

This child was not more than six years old, when his grandfather, Bernard Hill, took possession of his allotted place of retirement; and, as he was a fine and spirited boy, the old man promised himself much pleasure in his company, and much amusement in teaching him to read.

In those days there were few spiritual teachers in India; few places for public worship; and scarcely any English books. But Bernard Hill had lived so long ignorant of God, and in the en-

tire absence of every means of grace, that he neither regretted the want of a minister, nor of a place of worship: nevertheless, when he began to think how he should instruct his little grandson in reading, he felt very much the want of books; however, having seen the natives instruct their children by writing on the sand, he contrived to do the same.

It was a pleasing sight to see this old man, sitting in his bamboo porch in a cool evening, instructing his little boy, by causing him to repeat the letters and syllables which he wrote for him upon the sand with a short cane



which he held in his hand ; and, at the same time, you would no doubt have been led to lament, that no manner of religious instruction at any time mingled itself with these lessons.

In this way the little boy acquired so much knowledge, that it was necessary he should be put forward into a printed book.

But what was to be done? Books, and good books, and amusing books, were not then to be had in every European station in India as they may be now; the old man, therefore, began to fear that the work of education would be at a stand, and that his grandson would be compelled to be as ignorant as the little black children, who were to be seen rolling in the dust in every corner of the fort.

Now, the old man was not without pride; and he could not bear the thought of his own grandson Bernard being no better than his ignorant neighbours.

In this distress, thinking that

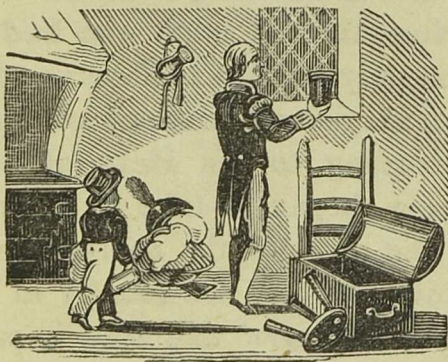
10 THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

any printed paper would be better than nothing, the old man fell to rummaging a chest, which had stood by unopened for some time, as it contained nothing which he considered of any use; and there, at the very bottom, among a heap of old military accoutrements, he found an old Bible,—one that had belonged to a comrade, who



had died years before, and had left him all the little he possessed.

Seeing the book, the old man was pleased ; not because it was a Bible, for he had rather it had been any other book, but because it might serve, in lieu of another, for one in which to practise his child in reading. So he took it



out of the chest, and aired it in the sun, for it was mouldy; then, putting it into the hands of the child, he caused him to make it his daily study; spelling it, and putting it together, until at length the little boy was able to read it perfectly, and to convey its contents correctly to the ears of his grandfather.

It was not long from this time before the old man, who had at first only listened to observe whether his son pronounced and spelt according to his ideas of propriety, began to take an interest in the *sense* of the sacred words which rung so continually in his ears; and now and then a pas-

sage would seem to take hold of his mind, and abide for days together in his thoughts, until, by degrees, he received the doctrine of the fall of man, and the depravity of man's nature; after which the whole system of salvation by Christ was unfolded to his view, until at length, by the divine blessing, "faith came by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. x. 17.

Thus did this old man find a TREASURE where he little expected any such thing; and the blessing which was first imparted to himself, was shortly afterwards extended to his grandson also. Indeed, so highly was this old



man favoured, that, when laid on his death-bed, he confessed to a pious English gentleman who visited him, that the greatest blessing he and his child had ever experienced, was that of being deprived of every other book but the Word of God.

And now, my dear young people, let me give you this advice,

you who are supplied with so many good and pleasant little books.—Make use of them rather to lead you to your Bible, than to lead you from it; for the Bible is a treasure which, the more and more you dig therein, will appear to you the more and more precious; for it is written, (Luke xi. 28,) “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.”

THE END.

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